

## THE CITY

*Lodge, George Cabot, 1873-1909*

### I

Wherever man has loved and lived,  
Has starved his soul or slaked his lust,  
Has trusted and betrayed his trust,  
Has wept, rejoiced, blasphemed, believed;  
Wherever in the senseless dust  
His wearied, hasty feet have trod;  
Wherever he has dreamed of God  
And dared believe that Time was just;  
Wherever, heedless to discern  
And careless of the soul's concern,  
Man's avid heart has coveted  
The little of his daily need, —  
Thrones, powers, dominions, riches, bread;  
While, overgrown with tare and weed,  
The fruit of Truth's eternal seed  
Was left to rot unharvested;  
Wherever man has heard, instead  
Of thought's serene, grave, inward voice,  
The world's persuasion, loud and sweet,  
And made with all the world his choice  
To traffic in the common street,  
To live as all men must who live  
For what reward the world can give,  
To wander aimless here and there  
On life's familiar thoroughfare  
Where the Innumerable pass,  
Whose days are waste as withered grass,  
In fear and hope, in storm and stress.  
From nothingness to nothingness;  
Wherever man has been steadfast  
And, patient as the truth must be,  
Fulfilled his human works and days,  
Or, blind with secret ecstasy,  
Has fled from death, and fled in vain,  
By vagrant, dark, eccentric ways  
Which led no-whither first and last;  
Wherever man, diseased, insane,  
Delirious, drunk in heart or brain,  
Has ravened like a raging beast,  
Has strayed or stayed, has been, has ceased,

Inglorious and irresolute;  
Wherever man was mild and mute,  
Was loud and fierce, was sane and strong;  
Wherever man has blown life's lute  
And phrased the harmony of things,  
Or touched the harp of love to song  
And learned to use the voice that sings;  
Wherever, in whatever days,  
Majestic, mighty, mad or mean,  
Man's human being once has been  
Or being once has ceased to be; —  
There, interlocked inseparably.  
Diverse yet single near and far,  
There is the City! — where the ways  
And byways of the City are.

## II

There is the City! — vast, sublime,  
Serene, discordant, sordid, small, —  
Hither and hence in space and time  
The self-same City, all in all,  
Is here and there, is first and last!  
There where the twilights fail and fall;  
There in the wide and wasted Past  
When Time was vacant, vague and vast;  
There where the light of truth is least,  
Where life, transcendent of the beast,  
Was first in man's resemblance cast;  
There where in jungle, waste and fen,  
Coeval with the birth of man,  
The byways and the ways began,  
There is the City — there and then!  
And there and thence the City is:  
Where near and far the countless ways  
Record in each evolving phase  
Man's endless metamorphosis;  
Thence from the sunless depths below,  
Hither by ways we know not of  
Of life necessity and love,  
The long, hard, human high-ways come;  
And whence they come and where they go, —  
There at the dark circumference,  
There is the City, there and thence; —  
Here where we live and make our home,  
Here is the City! — here and now:  
Here where the dull and aimless plow

Of gross desire and bitter need  
Furrows the barren fields where chance  
Has sown the seed of circumstance  
Whereof the fruit is Destiny;  
Here where the thrifty soil that teems  
With good grain waste and many a weed  
Starves at its root the Sacred Tree  
Of Knowledge; here where Love dies young,  
Where Truth's stern secrets find no tongue,  
Where the mind's weakness and the heart's despair  
Brim the deep bowl of human ignorance  
With the mandragora of dreams;  
Here in the loud, long thoroughfare  
Made straight and smooth by countless feet;  
Here in the mean, familiar street  
Where, in the Spirit's jeopardy,  
Men wake and sleep and take no care  
Of why or whither, whence or where: —  
Here is the City! — here are we! . . .  
Here is the City — Here! . . . But there,  
There where the brave are gone before,  
There where the lamps of Truth and Love  
Shine steadfast at the Secret Door,  
Is not the City! — there above,  
And there beyond and forward there;  
There where the high-ways hasten hence;  
There, up the steep and star-lit stair,  
Where they are gone, the Gods we did not know!  
Have we not seen them, heard them go  
In virtue and beneficence,  
The Bearers of the Sacred Flame?  
Who thro' the long, primeval twilights came,  
And thro' these purlieus where we are,  
Led by a faith, a song, a star,  
Passed on to where the summits kindle, where  
The living light grows large and lovelier,  
And where the eye long used to vigil may  
Discern, ineffable and far away,  
Tranquil as Truth's transcendent love,  
Spacious and excellently fair,  
Rise, pure as diamond,  
Poised in the sun-swept silence far beyond  
And far above,  
Where at its heart the City is,  
The still, clear marbles of the calm Acropolis!

### III

There is the City! — thither let us go!  
We have too long lived out our times in vain!  
Let us depart! What profit shall we gain  
If, when the labour of all our days is done,  
Ourselves are vanquished and the world is won?  
Let us depart! for well we know  
Life wills us forward to a better place  
Than this cramped room of weakness and disgrace,  
And forward all the song-voiced trumpets blow  
Their challenge to the rising sun!  
Forward the thoroughfares of thought go hence  
From excellence to excellence,  
And have we will to walk thereon,  
Hence, as they lead us, we may go!  
Hence as they lead us, They are gone,  
Those hardy exiles who with eager feet  
Fare forward up the shining street;  
And as They neither rest nor sleep  
But Truth's eternal vigil keep  
In strength and silence — so must we!  
For there, and always forward there,  
There is the City, where the soul  
Is free in Truth's divine control  
And native to the lucent air!  
Let us depart! — tho' there above  
It well may be the ways are steep  
The great lights far, the darkness deep,  
The Soul has no concern thereof, —  
Whose longing is all thither and all hence,  
Whose will is unappeased to make its home  
Not in these purlieus of the City where  
The sunless hovels of man's indigence  
Crowd meanly on the sordid thoroughfare,  
But there where thought's immeasurable dome  
Kindles and clears and is fulfilled with light!  
For there by day the lordly sun  
Of all the heart's surpassing love  
Moves in his azure calm immensities;  
For there by night  
The stars of Truth are one by one,  
Like silver syllables of song,  
Uttered in thought's tense taciturnities,  
And forward, all the large night long,  
In stately constellations move;  
For there the Parapets and Palaces,

Resplendent in their ordered distances, —  
The lofty Towers, the shining Dome  
Of the Spirit's Fatherhouse, of Home,  
Rise radiant in the lucent, free,  
Fabulous spaces of eternity;  
And on the ramparts, all day long,  
Clear-eyed and calm and vigilant,  
The mind's supreme tranquillities  
Brood on the soul's infinities  
Till all we are and all that is  
Is sacred and significant; —  
And there and then at last we may stand up and sing,  
Rise up with the rose-coloured dawn on either wing,  
And with a voice exceeding sweet and strong  
Phrase in the heart's antiphonies of song  
The soul's clear chaunt of challenge and reprieve, -  
And perfectly, at last, and wisely live!  
For, builded solely from its base for this,  
There, perfect at the core, man's City is!